

Have a taste for something different? Try a unique Indiana restaurant.

By Sally Campbell Grout

Why is it that no matter where you go, and no matter what sites you've seen, your stories of your travels always seem to get back to where and what you ate? So this summer, go ahead and plan a whole trip around fabulous food and interesting ambiance. Start by putting these (and more) Indiana restaurants on your list of must-visit places.

**A couple of great oldies and a taste of the blues.**

To get a real sample of Indiana flavor, you'll want to visit some of the restaurants that have been here the longest. If you're driving through West Lafayette, drive over to the Triple XXX Family Restaurant (765-743-5373). Opened in 1929, the Triple XXX is Indiana's first drive-in restaurant—and, although today's customers "dine in," it's still going strong. Hungry for breakfast around, say, two in the afternoon? Or three in the morning? No problem. The Triple XXX serves breakfast 24 hours a day, six days a week. (They close Sundays at 8 p.m. and reopen Mondays at 6 a.m.) Some favorite "non breakfast" menu items include burgers, patty melts, tenderloins, shakes, sundaes, floats, and refreshing Triple XXX root beer.

St. James Restaurant in Avilla (260-897-2114) was established in 1878, and has been owned by the same family, the Freemans, since 1948. The menu, which offers a number of items, features broasted chicken, seafood, and German dishes.

The Slippery Noodle Inn, located in Indianapolis (888-347-4748) and established in 1850, has the distinction of being Indiana's oldest bar. One visit tells you why this establishment has been so popular for so long: the Slippery Noodle showcases live blues seven nights a week. The menu, however, is practically guaranteed to make you smile. Offering weekly lunch and dinner specials, the Slippery Noodle has been known to serve up a Buffalo shrimp wrap, smoked pork chops, and a hot pastrami sub, among other things.

**You'll want to spell it "Ammmmmmish."**

Indiana is dotted with places that celebrate Amish life, and within those areas are restaurants serving some of the heartiest, tastiest food you'll ever eat.

Bring the whole crew to Das Dutchman Essenhaus in Middlebury (800-455-9471), Indiana's largest restaurant. Meals are served family-style, and

your family had better be hungry. Entrees and side dishes include real mashed potatoes, chicken, roast beef, and homemade bread dressing. Still have a little room? Try the made-from-scratch noodles and pies.

While the land that's now Amishville U.S.A. in Berne (260-589-3536) is no longer occupied by the Amish, it does serve to educate visitors about the people who once called it home. Tour the authentic Amish house, take a buggy ride, and enjoy a meal at the Essen Platz Restaurant, which features Swiss and Amish recipes and the Country Harvest Buffet.

In Montgomery, Gasthof Amish Restaurant & Bakery (812-486-4900) is part of Gasthof Amish Village. After a day shopping, touring, and—if your timing is right—hitting the flea market, enjoy a pants-popping meal at the Amish buffet. Homemade breads, cookies, cakes and pies are just a few of the items you'll find waiting at the hot food bar, salad bar, and Amish desert bar.

#### **Food and a view.**

Were it not for a tragic flood in 1937, The Overlook Restaurant in Leavenworth (812-739-4264) might not exist. As the water rolled in, “Old Leavenworth” was washed away, causing the townspeople to move up to the bluff. Just over a decade later, in 1948, the Overlook opened. Today, this hospitable restaurant offers an incredible view of the Ohio River, along with homemade biscuits, steak, seafood, pies, and fried chicken, an Overlook specialty. Spending a little extra time in Leavenworth? Enjoy more great food and another great view at The Dock Restaurant (812-739-4449). The dining room is always an option, but if the weather is nice, why not enjoy the famous codfish on the deck on the edge of the Ohio River?

#### **19<sup>th</sup> century charm.**

As the site of two 19<sup>th</sup> century attempts to create Utopian societies, Historic New Harmony (812-682-4488) has a well-deserved place in Indiana history books. Today's visitors can tour unique wooden structures, modern architecture, 19<sup>th</sup>-century buildings, formal and casual gardens, and a hedge labyrinth. If all that touring helps you work up an appetite, the Red Geranium Restaurant (800-782-8605) is a great place to sit back and enjoy a meal. The Red Geranium offers breakfast, lunch, and dinner in a beautiful setting, starting with massive hand-carved wooden doors. Inside, the Tillich Refectory Room offers an incredible view; the Garden Room showcases a painted orchard ceiling; the Main Dining Room is decorated in 19<sup>th</sup>-century décor; and the Grapevine Dining Room creates an intimate dining experience.

#### **A month of sundaes.**

It's not often that the ice cream sundae you're eating competes for your attention with the room where you're eating it. But that can happen at Zaharako's Ice Cream and Confectionery in Columbus (812-379-9329). As part of its décor, this old-fashioned ice cream parlor, which opened in 1900, has two Mexican onyx soda fountains that date back to 1905. In fact, they were purchased from the St. Louis World Exposition. The slightly newer pipe organ arrived from Germany in 1908. Mahogany wood enhances a vintage setting where you can enjoy homemade ice cream, sundaes, phosphates, burgers and sandwiches. Don't forget to make a stop at the candy counter!

### **Two places to perch for perch.**

The far northwest corner of Indiana isn't just a region, it's "The Region." Or at least that's what people from that part of the state call it. Tucked up there just across the border from Illinois, The Region has its own personality, its own traditions, and, naturally, its own restaurants. Two long-standing restaurants that Region folks like to frequent both feature a menu item that you don't find everywhere: lake perch. At Teibel's Restaurant in Schererville (219-865-2000), which opened in 1929, that perch can be served family style; other favorites, like fried chicken, are served up by the platter, too. In Hammond, Phil Smidt's Restaurant (219-659-0025), another establishment that's more than 70 years old, serves lake perch whole or boned. Phil Smidt's regulars will also tell you about the frog legs, gooseberry pie, and the restaurant's elegant interior.

### **Tastes of the town.**

When in Rome...eat Italian food. When in Indianapolis, eat at a restaurant that truly showcases "local flavor." Nearly 40 independent restaurants in the capital city share a passion for great food and incredible customer service, even while they each offer completely different menus and ambiance. These "Indianapolis Originals" invite you to try their unique establishments. For a complete listing of these restaurants, visit [indianapolisoriginals.com](http://indianapolisoriginals.com).

Richmond (800-828-8414) has long been known to antique lovers as a place to find one-of-a-kind items. To diners, it's also a place that celebrates one-of-a-kind eating experiences. At [visitrichmond.org](http://visitrichmond.org), you'll find a comprehensive list of restaurants in the area. So if you're planning your visit ahead, you can plan to visit a place you don't have at home.

### **Counting carbs? Too bad.**

Those poor carbohydrates. They served us well, and then they fell out of favor with the American diner. Welcome them back with a trip to the Nashville House (877-374-3317). The trademark menu item here: fried biscuits and baked apple butter. Main courses include ham, slow-roasted turkey, fried chicken and roast beef. In fact, you'll find several one-of-

kind restaurants serving generous meals throughout the Nashville/Brown County area (800-753-3255).

**A simply great steak.**

One day, man brought together meat and fire. And it was good. See the perfect evolution of this process at The Beef House (765-793-3947) in Covington, a destination Midwest Living magazine has called the best place to eat steak in Indiana in 1988 and 1994. Cooked on a charcoal grill, the steaks are tender and flavorful, and served with yummy rolls.

**And now for something completely different.**

South of Covington, in Terre Haute, locals prefer donuts with a little bit of an edge. Perhaps that's why Square Donuts (812-232-6463) is such a hit. These quad-sided yeast treats are sugar coated, fresh and delicious.

**Your table is waiting!**

To find more unique restaurants throughout Indiana, visit [enjoyindiana.com](http://enjoyindiana.com).